



Connection

the monthly newsletter

Radio station strikes magical chord

“Good morning, Harbor Country!! Glad you could join me this morning at WHCR-LP, 106.7 on your FM dial. Here’s your traffic report-- there is none. Weather-- it’s raining, but just you wait a few minutes-- it’ll change. Sports-- Three Oaks Little League took the Eaton Park Championship once again. And for breaking news we take you to Townline Beach in Union Pier where a man has just been diagnosed with a latent case of cabin fever....”

Harbor Country® Radio is about 14 months from going “on air,” but it’s already sending its message to every corner of this territory known as Harbor Country-- Michiana, Grand Beach, New Buffalo, Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, Sawyer, and Three Oaks. It won’t be the most powerful voice in the air, but it will certainly be our very own voice.

With the call letters WHCR-LP, you’ll be able to tune in at 106.7 FM. That is, of course, if you happen to be within the 3 mile radius of the transmitter that will be established in Three Oaks. LP stands for low power and this station is only going to pump out 100 watts. Engineering types have said that the signal could go farther depending on the atmospheric conditions.

So why do we need a radio station and why is it in Three Oaks? The whole concept started about three years ago as an offshoot of the Harbor Country Forum, a group established to tackle issues facing a “new world” especially after the 9/11 attack on our sensibilities. The group held public forums to discuss issues of journalism, futurism, terrorism-- a whole bunch of other “isms.” It’s success sparked the imagination of the attendees to say, “What if we could have this kind of discussion all the time?”

At the same time, the FCC was offering low power FM licenses to com-

munities. All you had to do was apply and wait in line. And wait. And wait. Several groups from the Harbor Country area applied with the hopes that one might get a license. Just about the time that everyone had almost forgotten they had applied, a license was granted to Harbor Arts to build a station in Three Oaks. Harbor Arts is the non-profit group that brings you events like Music in the Park.

A small group, a steering committee, met at Vickers Theatre in October to discuss the next steps. On November 20, they held an organizational meeting. At that time Jon Vickers was named temporary chair and Mike Hojnacki was named temporary Secretary of the committee.

At their December 18 meeting a mission statement was presented. It read: “Harbor Country Radio is dedicated to organizing, sponsoring and disseminating information on social, cultural and political issues as well as fostering the appreciation of “the Arts” through outreach education, community involvement, mentoring and programming.”

Going one step further the group determined that WHCR-LP programming might include the following: talk radio, music (all sorts), live remote

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CHAMBER BULLETIN BOARD

GUIDE DEADLINES

By now all Chamber members should have received their 2005 Harbor Country Guide advertising packet. (If you haven’t, call or stop by the Chamber office to get one.) It’s important to remember that the space reservation date is Friday, January 28. Those reservations must be accompanied by payment for the ad.

Also, please note that the deadline for artwork is February 18, 2005. The guide is usually released at the end of April.

Around 75,000 guides are distributed each year mostly through local sources, but many go out because of inquiries from area advertising (via Lodging Association ads) and through our website www.harborcountry.org.

ART ATTACK COMING!

Art Attack, a weekend of celebrating all that is art, is set for April 22-24. Area businesses should have already received a packet of information about this. February 25 is the deadline to get your brochure copy to the Art Attack committee. Brochures will be printed and ready for distribution the first part of April.

l e a d e r s h i p



Harbor Country®
Chamber of Commerce

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i n s i d e y o u r c h a m b e r

A new season is upon us

By Karen Gear, Chamber President

I hope that everyone in Harbor Country enjoyed a wonderful holiday season, and that you reflected on the blessings you have enjoyed in your life while living here.

The Chamber Board has spent a great deal of time over the last year refining what the Chamber actually does to match its decisions with our members' needs and concerns. Last July we adopted new by-laws that reflect the nature of the Chamber as it is today, as it has grown into, and what it will become.

We have built a stronger partnership with our friends in the Harbor Country Lodging Association with the signing of a new Joint Operating Agreement. That alone has changed the way we look at many things this year, especially funding and promoting local events. We don't want to be the driving force behind each and every project, but we certainly want to be a supportive organization. We have decided that our support, however, should also benefit our membership.

We have been working to make our committees stronger and capable of accomplishing their goals. Marketing finally has a budget. That was something long overdue. They will now be able to promote the area and the Chamber consistently to local and nearby markets.

Membership is constantly looking for member benefits. The point is to stretch each dollar you pay in dues for more services at no or little added cost. One program might be an online source for Harbor Country gift certificates.

Internet and Online services is constantly working to upgrade our website. Now we will have the capability to track what people are searching for. By providing this information to our membership we can make marketing adjustments to

fill the needs of our customers. Once again, you can see how the actions of one committee cross over and become a member service.

Community Development is steadfast on its mission to support events such as the Harbor Country fireworks (Blues Fest), Music in the Park, Sound of Silents Film Festival, and others.

Economic Development is also looking the strongest its ever been with a concerned and diverse committee roster. Progress will be made in forming opinions about the growth of Harbor Country.

We urge everyone to get involved. Committees are the best way. A new mandate established in our by-laws is that committees can no longer be comprised totally of board of directors. They have to seek participation from the general membership. Also, the hope is that the chairpeople of these committees will also be outside of the Board of Directors (currently a Director is the chair of a committee).

I invite you to ask questions, share your expertise with our committees and participate by getting involved in chamber-supported projects.

I will be getting back to you with more details on some of the interesting, new and improved member benefits that we are planning to release in the very near future.

Meanwhile, if you have any concerns talk to me or any board member for that matter. They are all listed on the left side of this page. Each one is dedicated to the cause that Harbor Country is the best place to live, work and play. They are equally dedicated to sustaining its future through controlled and responsible growth.

Harbor Country®
Connection
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Another phase

The Chamber's web site, harborcountry.org, is now in the process of the planned Phase II upgrade that will implement some very nice features. By the time this Connection edition is out, these changes should be in place. A major part of these upgrades are "transparent" to the ordinary visitor, but will make significant "back-end" technological advances in site content management.

For example, in the past, all our postings on the Festivals & Events page, This Weekend page, and Chamber Member calendar were handled manually, in a tedious regiment of tweaking a disjointed hodge-podge of information sources. With the resources of Lightsky, Inc. (Goshen, IN) to help in our

upgrade, our entire Events content management will be automated from one database which will create these event related pages dynamically, and on demand. It also puts the content management process in the Chamber office (where it belongs) rather than depending on the schedule and detachment of a webmaster. The visitor will experience a more helpful, easy to use search page to find area events.

Another great feature will be an automated home page background image transition based on season. For over a year now our home page had a cute family strolling down the beach, all year long, regardless of season. Now, with help from several sources, some nice images depicting more appropriate

seasonal scenes will automatically appear on the home page based on predetermined seasonal calendar launch dates.

And lastly, a feature we've long awaited, the ability to "save" the search queries our visitors are typing into our "Site Search" bar at the top of our pages. This information will be stored in a database and will help us identify visitor and member interests, and continue to improve our site information and navigation. While these are just some of the scheduled changes, the sum of them are aimed at providing our visitors with easy-to-find relevant & timely information, improved Chamber office automation, and give our members increased leads, exposure and business opportunity.

Committees join forces to support new and on-going events

The Marketing, Community Development, and Membership Committees of the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce have finally joined forces to get a handle on how to properly fund local events. Meeting in Union Pier, they hammered out details that not only promote and support new and/or ongoing events, but also offer a guiding hand in making sure the event is a success.

"We have so many resources within our group, it is significant that we have finally found a way to offer assistance to fledgling and continuing events," said chamber marketing director Mike Hojnacki.

Membership chair Patty Prino also wanted event funding to be equitable for chamber members. Chamber-sponsored events must offer members a 50% discount on participation fees.

Event planners must do their homework early. The chamber requires the application for funds to be submitted 120 days in advance of the event.

New this year are the marketing funds that can be earmarked to support specific events. Community development will also continue to budget monies for projects, especially fireworks, Music in the Park, and others.

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broadcasts at events and public meetings, literature, poetry, commentary, local news, mentoring programs, interviews, public service announcements, reviews of cultural events and shows, educational Q & A sessions, children's programs, student broadcasts, self-help discussions, and whatever else the community might want.

"I'm assuming that programming and format will consume a good share of our meetings to come," said Jon Vickers, who along with Lee Artz spearheaded the drive to apply for the license. "There seems to be a little bit of concern about the direction of the station. Personally, I think there needs to be some controversial 'stuff' as well as accessible stuff. There should be enough air time for everyone's point of view and for some great music as well."

The steering committee had already envisioned use of the station by the local

elementary school students, point/counterpoint discussions on issues facing the area, and a wide range of music to appeal to all tastes.

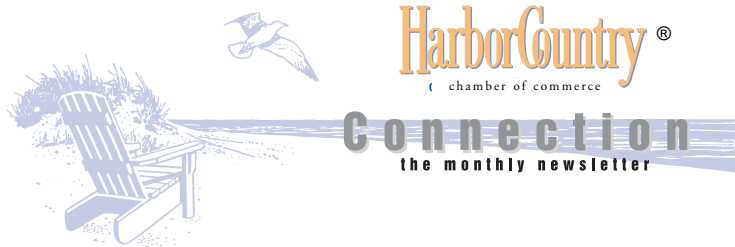
Though originally conceived to occupy a 2nd floor space in the Three Oaks Township Library, political correctness and the need for unbridled access, has forced the radio station to look for new digs. The hope is for a storefront location in downtown Three Oaks. Many spaces are being offered, though most don't meet the criteria of a "Northern Exposure" type of radio operation-- a place where you can look out at the town and people can come in and chat over a cup of coffee. It might not be a realistic dream when storefronts equate to bigger dollars in culturally enterprising Three Oaks. With many options, it doesn't seem like the space problem will take that long to resolve.

Next on the "to do" list is the list

itself. The list of equipment and a realistic cost for implementing the station. Costs range from \$1,000 to \$100,000 with about \$25,000 being the reasonable target. Fundraising and grant possibilities are now being researched.

Recently, a logo contest was started to give the community a chance to design a visual image for the station. It is hoped that our area's talented designers will sign on and produce a top-notch design to use for all of WHCR's marketing needs. Rules have been published in the local papers or you can email a request to artenergy@triton.net.

The next meeting is 10 a.m., Jan. 22 at the Three Oaks Township Library, 2nd floor balcony. Ideas and donations are always accepted and appreciated. They can be sent to Harbor Country Radio, 6 N. Elm, Three Oaks, MI 49128. Please make checks payable to *Harbor Arts*.



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 Three Oaks, MI 49128
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